

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs



*Thirty-Seventh Generational
Ch'an Patriarch Ling Yo of Wei Shan*

The Master was born in Fu Chou. He was a member of the Chao family. At twenty-three years of age he went to pay his respects to Master Bai Chang. The Master granted that he was a room-entering disciple. Because of the incident of poking the fire, the Master became enlightened and was appointed kitchen manager. Later, Master Bai Chang made Wei Shan the Abbot, and exhorted him, "I have transformed conditions here at these spectacular Wei Shan mountains. You should dwell here and continue my school, vastly taking across those who come afterwards to study here!" When the Bhikshu Hua Lin heard that he said, "So and so is just the kitchen manager, how did he get to be Abbot?"

Patriarch Bai Chang replied, "Whoever can let one word fall that is truly outstanding gets to be Abbot." Then he pointed to a pure bottle and said, "If this isn't called a pure bottle what do you call it?"

Bhikshu Hua Lin said, "It can't be called a wooden stick."

The Patriarch asked the same question of the Master. The Master simply kicked over the pure bottle and left the room. Patriarch Bai Chang laughed and said, "The senior-seated lost out to a mountain dweller!" The Master then made his appearance on Wei Shan mountain and his sect became known as the Wei Yang sect.

A praise says:

He kicked over the pure bottle.
The waves arose on Wei Shan;
The water buffalo is sound asleep.
Under the shade of the green willows,
There is neither quietude nor leisure.
Who can assign a reason?
A single branch stood out,
As the spring breeze rustled
 through peach and plum blossoms.